



NOAA Restoration Center/FishAmerica Partnership Strengthens



NOAA Fisheries and the American Sportfishing Association's FishAmerica Foundation announced on June 6, 2000 a \$1 million dollar partnership to help communities restore coastal and marine habitat at the local level to benefit our nation's fisheries. The partnership announcement and celebration on Capitol Hill represented an exciting step in expanding this visionary, highly successful public-private partnership, which has grown ten-fold from its 1998 funding level of \$100,000.

The announcement last year was made possible through Congressional support of the Fisheries Habitat Restoration Initiative in the President's 2000 budget request, and expands the breadth of the ongoing partnership between NOAA Fisheries and FishAmerica established in 1998. Seventy-two new projects were selected in two rounds of 2000 funding under the expanded partnership, that on average leverage \$10 for every NOAA dollar invested. Projects cover a wide geographic range, and focus on a diverse array of restoration techniques designed to benefit marine and anadromous fish resources. Projects include fish ladder installation and small dam removal projects in New Hampshire, fish passage improvements in Massachusetts, seagrass restoration in Virginia and Maryland, coral reef and mangrove restoration in Florida, marsh habitat restoration in Texas, kelp plant restoration off the California coast, reconnection of historic wetlands to tidal bays in Oregon, opening of impounded sloughs and invasive plant removal in Washington, and streambank stabilization and revegetation in Alaska, among others.

Human activities and development have caused unprecedented destruction of coastal and wetland habitat. In a world of reliance on natural resources for a sound economy, and stress over natural resource management decisions, stakeholders are coming together to assess and evaluate natural resource priorities, promote awareness and education, develop common goals and facilitate local habitat enhancement projects. Through the involvement of students and citizen volunteers, community-based restoration projects are building a base of interest and commitment for the sustainable future of America's natural resources. Community-based habitat restoration partnerships like the NOAA/FishAmerica partnership are successful because projects significantly leverage available funds through local contributions, including land, volunteer support or other in-kind services, and benefit from one-on-one technical assistance from NOAA Fisheries regional staff to help to repair habitats required by marine and anadromous fish, endangered species and marine mammals.

In recognition that the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program is an integral part of NOAA Fisheries' mission to restore degraded fish habitat, NOAA Fisheries is continuing to build successful partnerships like the NOAA/FishAmerica association, and is seeking new partners to jointly identify, select and co-fund new fisheries habitat restoration projects. A successful FY 2001 budget appropriation process dedicated \$6 million dollars for fisheries habitat restoration in addition to the \$2 million in base funds for community-based and regional habitat restoration projects, enabling NOAA to dramatically increase the number of habitat restoration projects that will be implemented in 2001.

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